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IBSEN

In that old-fashioned and well-nigh obsolete book, the Bible, we find these words: "By their fruits shall ye know them;"—and of no one is this more true than of Ibsen. The man and the work are one; to understand the one, you must know the other.

It may lend a little clearness to see how an author has been approached. First, the floating talk of Ibsen; the sort that Mr. Shaw collects for us in the "Quintessence of Ibsenism"—notably, "Candid foulness," "An Egotist and a bungler," "A crazy fanatic,"—and so on. Next, the seeing of "Ghosts" extremely well done. It filled one with fear and wonder; it was so terrible in its simplicity—so awful in its truth. Ibsen's letters came next. They seemed to contradict the talk. The reason for Ibsen and for his work lay further back than a mere disgust for modern society; lay deeper than what Mr. Boyesen calls Ibsen's "ruthless satisfaction in showing what a paltry contemptible lot men are," for in the letters there was mentioned "the good-heartedness of his childhood," and there also was found the declaration—"A man shares the responsibility and the guilt of the society to which he belongs." We do not know at what period Ibsen formulated this creed for himself; but it explains so much, that we must believe it to have been inherent—part and parcel of his character. Each soul bears "the sins of the world."

In these same letters there was much about his country; this led to the reading of the history of Norway, which gave more explanation. Next was read Mr. Boyesen's "Commentary on Ibsen." Then the plays; last of all, Doctor George Brandes' critical studies of Ibsen and Björnson. Through all, the feeling that the man and the work were one, grew stronger; until, after reading Mr. Shaw's essay, and all of Mr. Archer's prefaces, and Mr. Gosse's prefaces, also Mr. Huneker and the newspaper notices, this feeling intensified to such a degree that it became impossible to consider the problems of Ibsen's dramas without at the same time considering the problem of Ibsen and the production of *him*. This article is therefore based on Ibsen's self-revelation in his letters, and on the production of him by the history of his country.

The first "fruit" that we have to examine is the play "Catilina." The reasoning in Catilina is (I quote from Mr. Boyesen) that the Empire of Rome is rotten to the core, and, unable to redeem it, Catilina resolves to destroy it. Immature, crude, bitter and rebellious, is the verdict on Catilina. In a youth of twenty-one immaturity and crudity go without saying; but the bitterness and rebellion developing in the early youth of one who had been a "good-hearted" child, should be accounted for.

In one of his letters, Ibsen says: "During the time I was writing "Brand" I had on my desk a glass with a scorpion in it. From time to time the animal was ill. Then I used to give it a piece of soft fruit, upon which it fell furiously and emptied its poison into it, after which it was well again. Does not something of the same kind happen with us poets? The laws of Nature regulate the Spiritual world also."

We may look on "Catilina," then, as in two ways a piece of fruit, and go further back — back to the history of Norway for the causes that produced the stored poison.

From the death of King Hakon in 1319, and the marriage of his only child, a daughter, with the Crown of Sweden, down to 1814, Norway had no history of her own; first, she was absorbed into Sweden; then she, with Sweden, became a Danish colony, and even when, in the 16th century, Sweden shook herself free from Denmark, Norway remained under Danish rule. During this period, until Norway was, by the peace of Kiel, in 1814, turned over to Sweden, Norwegian energy seemed to lie dead — the old enterprise which had made the brilliant history of the Norse kings seemed to have perished, and intellectual life fell as low as commercial prosperity. "The vigorous Norse-Icelandic literature was supplanted by versions of foreign legends and history, but even that disappeared, and it seems as if, for a while, the Norwegians had ceased to read as well as to write."

Christianity had been driven into the country by the persuasion of the sword; the Reformation seemed to have followed the same route, but Lutheranism and its intensification, Calvinism, took firm hold, and we find that during these dead centuries, little but hymns and theology were produced in Norway, where there seems to have been but one printing-press. The first

signs of revival was in 1811, when the University of Christiania was founded; the next in 1814, when Norway ceased to be a Danish colony. These two events, we are told, "led to the founding of Norwegian literature."

Thus from the days of King Hakon down to 1814, Norway had been "en-smalling"—if it is permitted to coin a word. The great families had, by a process of long division, become small farmers and lumber dealers; the nation had democratized and commercialized down to the level of the most pronounced Philistinism. Literature lay dead, and life was reduced to the smallest things—to the deadest issues; the pendulum had swung from Vikings to Pastor Manders.

Is it strange that in looking back, not only to his early life but to his country, Ibsen should write: "That is the accursed thing about small surroundings—they make the soul small." And again: "When I think how slow, and heavy, and dull the general intelligence is at home, when I observe the low standard by which everything is judged, a deep despondency comes over me, and it often seems to me that I might just as well end my literary activity at once. They really do not need poetry at home; they get along so well with the *Parliamentary News* and the *Lutheran Weekly*. . . . I feel, too, most painfully affected by the crudity, the plebeian element in our public discussion. . . . Distinction of Soul seems to be on the decline at home."

Fourteen years after the peace of Kiel, after the cession of Norway to Sweden, that is fourteen years after the foundation of Norwegian literature was laid, before the stones were above ground, so to speak, in the small lumber-exporting town of Skien, Henrik Ibsen was born. His grandfather had been a sea-captain, his father was a merchant; but of them and of Ibsen's home, we hear little. The town, however, was noted as being the center of "pietistic religious influence." And it is not possible because of this peculiar kind of religious influence—the kind that Luther and Calvin left us, the kind that Ibsen gives us in his Norwegian Pastors—because of this influence the child Ibsen became "fascinated by the jail, the pillory and the madhouse?" His father failing when Ibsen was eight,

there was no money to educate the boy, and at sixteen the boy, who had been "a shy and silent child," was apprenticed to an apothecary in Grimstad. Of his shyness, Doctor Brandes says: "It did not require many disappointments to make him shrink into himself, with his heart full of distrust of the world around him. How early must he have been wounded, repulsed, humbled, as it were, in his original inclination to believe and to admire?"

Grimstad was another small shipping town, and seemed to share the same narrowing influences that obtained in Skien. Here there were also social differences, and though the young apprentice knew the sons of the upper circle, he was not received into that circle. He was poor and lonely; he realized the smallness about him, and caricatured it; he made enemies.

In the Schleswig-Holstein war between Denmark and Prussia, the young fellow was bold enough to announce that as Norway and Sweden were Scandinavian states, they should stand by Denmark, and declared for defeat rather than "perfidious inaction." But the "Utilitarian ship-owning community" of Grimstad, would not take this view. "War would destroy shipping, while neutrality would enable Norway to profit by the troubles of her neighbors." Added to all this, the young fellow realized the limitations of his education — the almost impassible barriers that his ignorance raised between him and his ambition to reach "the highest and most perfect attainable degree of greatness and understanding." His plan was to enter the University of Christiania. His preparations for the entrance examinations was done at night, and so was his writing of "Catilina." It was in 1850, when Ibsen was twenty-two, that he went to Christiania, to enter first a "Cramming School." Among his fellow-students was Björnson, who wrote a verse describing Ibsen:

Overstrained and lean, of the color of gypsum,
Behind a beard, huge and coal-black, was seen Henrik Ibsen.

After an incredibly short preparation, Ibsen "scraped through" the examinations. In the meantime "Catilina" had been refused by the manager of the Christiania theatre. A fel-

low-student volunteered to publish the play at his own expense, the two planning to travel together in the East on the proceeds. Only thirty copies were sold, the rest being used as waste-paper.

At this time Ibsen was miserably poor — too poor for daily dinners — and as proud as poor. A second play, "The Warrior's Tomb," was accepted by the theatre, and the local fame of this caused Ibsen to be called as "Stage Poet," and later the manager of the new theatre at Bergen. Some romantic small pieces followed, that "pleased the populace;" then a musical tragedy, "Norma, or a Politician's Love," which "scourged the spirit of compromise in Norwegian politics." Later, in 1856, came "The Feast of Solhaug," which Ibsen in later years wished to disown. In 1857 "Lady Inger of Ostrat," laid in the 16th century, when national feeling was at a very low ebb. It was in 1857 that Ibsen returned to Christiania.

Of Christiania Mr. Boyesen says: "It was but a big, overgrown village, a hotbed of slander and scandalous gossip, and its intellectual life was incredibly meagre. . . . One hundred thousand village souls do not make a city. . . . In Christiania there was, during the years of Ibsen's residence, no escape from the Philistine. . . . He dominated society from the bottom to the top. He imposed his crude judgements upon all, and would tolerate no dissent. Björnson had his partisans, who pulled down Ibsen; and Ibsen had his, far less numerous, who criticised Björnson. . . . It is not strange that Ibsen grew weary of this petty, narrow-minded and unprofitable strife."

In 1858 Ibsen married Susanna Thoresen, step-daughter of Madalena Thoresen, a Norwegian novelist. Of Ibsen's wife we have but one sketch, made by Ibsen himself. "Hers is exactly the character desiderated by a man of mind," he writes, "she is illogical but has a strong poetic instinct, a broad and liberal mind, and an almost violent antipathy to all petty considerations."

In this same year "The Vikings at Helgeland" came out, taken largely from the Icelandic Sagas. In Christiania, meanwhile, there was a movement made to take the theatre from under Danish management. Ibsen entered into this movement, and he was one of the founders of the "Norwegian Society," whose ob-

ject was to assert the Norse nationality. Björnson was president; Ibsen, vice-president. The Danish manager of the theatre, refusing Ibsen's play, "The Vikings at Helgeland," parties were formed immediately, and a fierce newspaper war set afoot. It was after this, in 1862, that Ibsen's first satire "Love's Comedy," appeared. This I have been unable to get. I quote from Doctor George Brandes: "Love's Comedy" united a cutting scorn for Philistine erotics with a profound distrust of the sustaining powers of love through the changes of a life-time, and a strong doubt of its ability to retain its ideality and enthusiasm unimpaired and unchanged through wedded life. . . . People were furious at this attack on the amatory institutions of society, engagements, marriages, and so forth. Instead of taking it to themselves they began, as is customary in such cases, to search into Ibsen's private life, and to investigate the nature of his own marriage. As Ibsen once put it: 'The printed criticism of the comedy might have been borne at a pinch, but the oral and private criticism was absolutely intolerable.'"

In his letters Ibsen says of this play: "The only person at that time who approved the book, was my wife . . . this my countrymen did not understand, and I did not choose to make them my father-confessors. So they excommunicated me. All were against me. The fact that all were against me, that there was no longer anyone outside my own family circle of whom I could say 'He believes in me,' must, as you can easily see have aroused a mood which found its outlet in 'The Pretenders.' . . . Exactly at the time when 'The Pretenders' came out, Frederick VII died, and the war (Denmark and Germany) began. I wrote a poem, 'A Brother in Need' (alluding to Denmark). The Norwegian Americanism which had driven me back at every point rendered it ineffectual. Then I went into exile."

Thus private slander and public failure and enmity; indignation that his country did not keep her plighted word this second time to Denmark; all this coming after years of poverty — years of despondency and of doubt — "afraid lest all my instincts should be wasted into ugliness," so afraid, that years afterwards he writes of "all those cold, uncomprehending Norwegian eyes at the windows and in the streets" — doubt of himself, inten-

sified by his shrinking shyness; doubt of ever reaching his goal of clearness and completeness; of ever becoming the champion of great ideas; doubt if ever his democratized, commercialized Philistine countrymen would receive his ideas, would try to arouse themselves to better things — completed Ibsen's misery.

The uninvited rivalry with Björnson, too, must have had its effect. In his criticism of Björnson, Brandes says: "Strong as a beast of prey. . . he had no nerves. . . No literary hostility could possibly crush him; and as to the greatest danger that threatens an author, the oblivion into which his name may chance to fall, a danger which for several years threatened his great rival Henrik Ibsen, there could be no question of that with Björnson. . . He had none of that dread of the light which so frequently forms a trait in the temperament or character of shy or more reserved men, who have always something to overcome when they make public display of their mental or physical individuality. Ibsen has described this feeling in his poem 'Afraid of the Daylight.' "

But with all his inward miseries, Ibsen fought a solitary fight. He makes no demand for sympathy. Of Ibsen's poetry, which seemed to reach the public by accident, Mr. Boyesen says: "The burden of all is sad, and it has an undertone of a chilly, cheerless discomfort which ripples with a cold shudder down one's back. . . One poem, 'The Power of Memory,' refers obviously to these dark years,"—The years that drove Ibsen into exile:

THE POWER OF MEMORY

Have you ever heard how a bear-tamer's pet
Is taught to dance so he'll never forget?

Into a big caldron the bear is invited,
And under the caldron a fire is lighted.

A wheezy hand-organ the sentiment voices
'Rejoice in Life,' and the bear rejoices.

With anguish poor Bruin begins to prance;
He cannot stand still, and he therefore must dance.

Whenever he hears that tune at the gate way
A dancing devil possesses him straightway.

Myself in that caldron once stood, o'er the fire;
The music played, and the heat was dire.

Then more than my skin was burned, I regret it;
But never, ah! never, can I forget it!

Whene'er of those days an echo has found me
I instantly felt the hot caldron around me.

'Neath the roots of my nails pierce the keen stings of heat—
Then straight I must dance upon metric feet.

Of this exile we read: "He has lived by turns in Italy, in Dresden, in Munich . . . he has no permanent abode . . . he has found his life in his work . . . he has lived as in a tent, among pieces of hired furniture, which could be sent back on the day appointed for his departure . . . he has accustomed himself to feel at home in homelessness. . . He is separated from his people; he has no work that connects him with any people or party, not even with a magazine or newspaper at home or abroad. He is a solitary man, and in his isolation he writes:

My countrymen, who poured in draughts unsparing
The wholesome bitter tonic-drink wherethrough
Though sick to death, I nerved myself anew
To face the fight of life with steadfast daring.
My countrymen, I send you greeting!—you
Who lent me Fear's winged sandals for my faring,
Who lent me Exile's staff and Sorrow's pack,—
Lo! from afar I send you greeting back.

Even so might Dante have written.

Ibsen says: "Luther introduced Philistinism into the world," and in Norway, Ibsen's world, Ibsen realized, and fled from narrowness, crudity, misinterpreted ideals, an indestructible self-satisfaction, and above all, dominating all, like the great "Boyg," the spirit of compromise, in short, the Philistinism, left by Luther, and intensified by Calvin.

Ibsen has been severely criticised as a moralist, as a dramatist, as a poet; but the Frenchman who, looking at a bust of Ibsen, said: "The expression is more spiritual than poetic," put his finger on Ibsen — a spirit. As is Matthew Arnold's "Power, not ourselves, that makes for Righteousness" so is Ibsen a power — sometimes not himself — that makes for liberty, — the same lib-

erty that Luther upset the world to win, — “The Divine Right of Private Judgment.”

Ibsen did not attack Christianity, but he spent his life in fighting Protestantism, which is the Mother of Puritanism and of Modern Pharisaism — all quite different from Christianity, and all of which are bound up in the Philistinism which resulted from Luther’s rebellion and from his creed of “The Divine Right of Private Judgment.” Ibsen, meanwhile, being himself a logical outcome of Luther, was Protestant to the core, and, like Calvin he burned his nation as Calvin burned Servetus, at the stake of this liberty; declaring that his people were “free men with slave souls.” At the same time he announced that “the truest liberty is found under Absolutism.” By which he meant that under Absolutism the struggle for liberty is always going on, — and the thing which is being struggled for lives, grows; while the thing we possess, feel sure of, may be neglected — forgotten. He might have added, that it is in obedience that the highest liberty is found, and not in every man setting up for himself his own standard, as do those who claim to live according to the creed of the “Divine Right of Private Judgment.”

Ibsen held this creed too, but the difference between such people and Ibsen is, that Ibsen realized always that it was the “Right” that was Divine, and not the “Judgment.” For it has seemed to be the peculiarity of Protestant humanity to fall into the mistake of thinking that it is the “Private Judgment” that is Divine, and this view so elevates each one of us in our own eyes, — so mounts to the brain, — so fertilizes the root of self-righteousness, — that in a moment we make ourselves the judges of all within reach, and we burn them at the stake of our “Divine Private Judgment.” And when people have, for generations, lain supine, wrapped in these views, they become what Ibsen thought the Norwegians had become — “The Righteous that need no repentance;” — they become “the people, and wisdom will die with them;” they become the Pharisees, who “are not as other men.” Let us thank God that there are some “other men.” Ibsen was one of these other men.

In his early writings Ibsen held up to his nation pictures of their past, when they were free and vigorous — pictures of the

days when there were giants; later, he lashed them with satire, he "piped unto them, and they would not dance; he mourned unto them, and they would not weep," then he turned all his powers on them,— became what he called "State Satirist." He asks savagely: "Why do all of us whose standpoint is a European one, occupy such an isolated position at home? . . . because the people at home think parochially, feel parochially, and regard everything from a parochial and not from a national or Scandinavian standpoint."

Ibsen believed, with other seers, that "Truth shall make you free," and in striking for liberty, he took Truth, no matter how revolting, for weapon. Being a Realist, he fights with this weapon of Truth first within himself. He knew, none better, where to find good and evil, true and false, sweet and bitter; he knew that in each one of us all the fundamentals live, and move and have their being. He declares: "Everything that I have written has the closest connection with what I have lived through, even if it has not been my own personal experience." Further he declares: "A man's gifts are not a property, they are a duty." Then comes the announcement of his great creed: "A man shares the responsibility and the guilt of the society to which he belongs."

Believing this, it is not strange that Ibsen spared nothing,— least of all himself — became an almost absolutely impersonal power. If he was responsible for the guilt about him, he must fight it, he must use his "gifts that are a duty" to rouse and better his people; and we find that he wrote entirely for his people. He had no vanity, he was too earnest to be vain, and he did not dream of a world-audience. His universality arose from the fact that he dealt with elemental truths. But according to his letters, he thought first always of Norway. Nor had he any mock modesty on the subject of his gifts; here again his earnestness saved him. "My book *is* poetry," he writes, "and if it is not, then it will be. The conception of poetry in our country, in Norway, shall be made to conform to the book." He was gifted; but as these gifts were not to him a means to self-glorification, he could afford to announce them. They were as a search-light to find the truth, and this truth when

found must be a weapon to drive out the Pastors with their mis-interpretation of ideals; the politicians with their graft; the mayors with their traditions used as sleeping-draughts; the Trolls with their mottoes — which is one outcome of the creed of “The Divine Right of Private Judgment”—“unto himself enough;” the formless, pervading “Boyg” of Compromise that had enfolded his early life, that had met him at every turn:

Forward or back, and it's just as far,
Out or in, and it's just as straight!
He is there! and there! and he's round the bend!
No sooner I'm out than I'm back in the ring!

It was this creed of “the responsibility for the society to which one belongs” that made him say: “Friends are an expensive luxury; and when a man's whole capital is invested in a calling and in a mission in life, he cannot afford to keep them. The costliness of keeping friends does not lie in what one does for them, but what one, out of consideration for them, refrains from doing.” Thus he went alone, as of old did David, to battle against the Philistines.

When an author deals in Fundamentals, Elementals, his work is necessarily Universal, and in such a case it seems futile to specialize in criticism, to suggest what authors influenced him, to say where in the play there was machinery used, or where there was beauty, to say where the verse form in the poem changes. Just as in contemplating the soul of a person, if that were possible, it would be immaterial to observe that the nose of the body was pug or aquiline, or the elbows sharp or round, even though these may be, in a far-off way, symptoms of inward things. So it is with Ibsen,— he is elemental, and to specialize in criticism is futile.

Unfortunately, too, for the critics, Ibsen has lived to tell us of his own work, and in criticising one of his own critics, he says: “He writes of our over-reflective age which makes the witches in ‘Macbeth’ symbolize something which takes place in Macbeth himself; yet in the very same article he, himself, makes a distracted passenger on board ship (Peer Gynt) symbolize Terror. Why, proceeding in this manner, I will undertake to turn your

works, and those of every other poet, into allegories from beginning to end."

The only symbol we can use, then, is Ibsen's own symbol of the scorpion and the soft fruit, and suggest that "The Pretender," the last of his Norwegian historic plays, besides showing his people a picture of the days in which they were at least active, was a piece of soft fruit into which the scorpion of Self injected the poison of rivalry between the Author and Björnson, writing Björnson into Hakon, and himself into Skule and Nicholas.

We find that Ibsen and Björnson are, by their respective friends set up as rivals, — that Ibsen was shy, — was distrustful of himself; that Björnson is described as being "half chieftain, half poet." This fits Hakon, as the self-distrust suits Skule. And to suggest this is not to cast, nor to wish to cast, any slur on Ibsen, for he was great enough to do such a thing. The rivalry was forced on these men, and Björnson seems to have had a rather protective, patronizing attitude towards Ibsen. Further, the sequel of the break in their friendship, which no one accounts for, which Ibsen tried to heal, which took place just as Ibsen was forging to the front, seems to mean that Björnson had not provided himself with a piece of soft fruit. Besides, Ibsen tells us frankly: "Everything which I have created as a poet, has had its origin in a frame of mind, and in a situation in life. I never wrote because I had, as they say, 'found a good subject.' " Coming from a man as reserved, as shy as Ibsen, this utterance is as brave as we instinctively believe it to be true. Again, Ibsen says: "In every new poem or play I have aimed at my own spiritual emancipation and purification." Thus, it does not seem that the suggestion of looking on "The Pretenders" as a piece of soft fruit that made for the spiritual purification of Ibsen, is either too far-fetched, or too symbolic. For the beauties of "The Pretenders," to name which, would be to specialize in criticism, you will do well to go to the text.

Pursuing the plan of asking Ibsen to reveal himself, of tracing the why of the fruit that we find, we quote again from Ibsen's letters. Of his next drama, "Brand," he writes: "About the time of my arrival in Copenhagen" (he was just going into exile)

"the Danes were defeated at Dybbøl. In Berlin I saw King William's triumphant entry with trophies and booty. During these days 'Brand' began to grow within me like an embryo. When I arrived in Italy the work of unification there had been already completed by means of a spirit of self-sacrifice which knew no bounds."

It was this second Schleswig-Holstein war that had helped to drive Ibsen into exile. After many promises to her Sister State (Denmark), Norway had, at the last, refused to help her against Germany. Ibsen saw in Copenhagen and in Berlin the results of this pusillanimous desertion, this compromising spirit of his country. In Rome he found the unification of Italy accomplished by a "self-sacrifice that knew no bounds," and he wrote "Brand."

Everywhere in this poem sacrifice is demanded — "All or nothing." "That which thou art, be it completely." The characteristics which drove Ibsen out of his country come to the front in the lack of energy in the people; in the Mayor, the Dean, the Schoolmaster, and their talk of tradition, — of the great past, — of the necessity for compromise, — and "Brand" lashes them as Ibsen felt that Norway should be lashed. He is unsparing. It is a world-sermon full of wonderful poetic beauty. Many questions are raised and left unanswered, for, true to his creed, Ibsen leaves each soul to judge for itself. But of these questions, the main question is *not* had Brand a right to sacrifice his wife and child. Mr. Shaw suggests: "He might have sent them South, and have sacrificed himself alone." The point of the poem is "All or nothing." "White or black — not gray." No compromise; not the smallest fraction retained, — wife, nor child, nor fortune, — not enough fortune to send the child South and so to hold back something. All must go. He lashes, also, the modern sentimental philanthropy; he lashes all weakness that masquerades itself as love. Will, Will, Self-sacrifice; and at the end Brand, driven out, deserted, cast away, demands: "Does not the utmost yielding of man's will merit *something?*" And the Voice answers: "He is *Deus caritatis*."

Here comes in the Calvinistic theology in which Ibsen has been steeped for generations; the idea of reward, payment, a

bargain with the Almighty; of man's ability to win salvation for himself; the sufficiency of man; the divinity of man's judgment;—and the answer comes from Ibsen's heart,—“He is a loving God.” This would not square with the only theology that Ibsen had ever met, and he leaves the problem there.

When Cannon Farrar, in his “Eternal Hope,” demanded to know how the Anglican Church found it possible to hold Eternal Punishment, Doctor Pusey answered: “The Church has her long list of Saints and Martyrs, but not one name condemned.”

No man dare think his judgment so divine as to condemn his brother man. So with Ibsen; and he leaves each soul to exercise the divine right to judge for itself.

“Brand” waked Norway up, but through a mistake. Norway imagined that “Brand” was meant to be a theological poem; that their erring countryman had repented,—had returned to the fold of the self-righteous,—of “The Elect,”—and on this account granted Ibsen a stipend of ninety pounds; for it is understood that when Ibsen wrote “Brand” he was in actual want.

The mistake of Norway was quite natural, because of the theology in “Brand,” but Ibsen quickly undeceived the nation. “Brand,” he writes, “has been misconstrued, at least as regards my intention,—to which you may answer that the critic is not concerned with the intention. The misconception has evidently arisen from the fact of Brand's being a priest, and from the problem being of a religious nature. Both these circumstances are entirely unimportant. I could have constructed the same syllogism just as easily on the subject of a sculptor, or politician, as of a priest. I could have had an equally satisfactory vent for the mood which impelled me to create, if instead of Brand I had written, say, of Galileo,—making him, of course, hold his ground and not admit that the earth stands still.” Again: “That Brand is a clergyman is really immaterial. The demand, ‘All or nothing,’ is made in all domains of life,—in love, in art and so on. Brand is myself in my best moments, just as certainly as it is certain that by self-analysis I brought to light many of the qualities both of ‘Peer Gynt’ and of ‘Stansgaard.’”

Ibsen took a priest for hero instinctively. Any other profes-

sion would have done as well, perhaps, but, for the *motif* of self-sacrifice an author born in the early 19th century would naturally select a priest, or a woman.

"After 'Brand,' " Ibsen writes, "comes 'Peer Gynt,' as though of itself. . . . It was written in Southern Italy. . . . So far from one's future readers, one becomes reckless. This poem contains much that is reminiscent of my own youth, for Aase, my own mother, with necessary exaggerations, served as model, as she did also for Ingä in 'The Pretenders.' "

It seems to be an accepted fact that Ibsen "used the circumstances and recollections of his own childhood as a kind of model in the description of the life of the wealthy John Gynt's household,"—and some of the "wounds and humbling" of the child Ibsen must have come because of the fall of his family from wealth to poverty. And doubtless, as in "Peer Gynt," so with the Ibsens, the friends and neighbors thought the fall a righteous judgment.

Although in reading "Brand," and then "Peer Gynt," one feels that the second is the revolt — so to speak — from the first; that after the strain of the one, nature demanded the relaxation of the other; that after the "All or nothing" of "Brand," the wholesale renunciation, the Troll motto, "unto himself enough," was almost necessary to the author—one realizes, also, quite clearly in "Peer Gynt," the necessity of freedom to the boy Ibsen, whose whole nature demanded truth and liberty. Again in the wild revolt against all the conventions that are used to hide so much hypocrisy; against the ideals that were misinterpreted; against "the righteous that needed no repentance," he cries:

Oh! if I had my knife-blade driven
Clean through the heart of them, one and all!

Those who had wounded him, those who had thought his father's fall, his mother sorrows a righteous judgment.

"Peer Gynt" has been called, and truly, a tragic satire. Here all the national characteristics, that Ibsen seemed to think were Norwegian only, that roused Ibsen to fury, were treated satirically; while in "Brand" they had been dealt with tragi-

cally. The satire of the "Green Woman," her acknowledged and deliberate self-deception:

There's one thing you must remember—
 All our possessions have two-fold form.
 When you come to my father's hall
 It well may chance that you are on the point
 Of thinking you stand in a dismal moraine.
 Black it seems white, and ugly seems fair.

And Peer answers:

Big it seems little, and dirty seems clean.

The satire of the onion, peeled down to the last and no kernel to be found:

To the innermost centre
 it's nothing but swathings, each smaller and smaller
 —Nature is witty.

The tragedy of the Thread-Balls:

We are thoughts;
 thou should have thought us.

of the Withered Leaves:

We are a watchword;
 thou shouldst have sung us;

of the Dewdrops:

We are tears
 unshed forever.

of the Broken Straws:

We are deeds;
 thou shouldst have achieved us.

—and Peer's cry:

How dare you debit
 what is negative against me?

And the Button-Moulder explains:

You are not one thing nor t'other then, only so-so.
 For both vigor and earnestness go to a sin.
 Yourself you have never been at all—
 Then what does it matter your dying right out?
 So, into the waste-box you needs must go,
 And there, as they phrase it, be merged in the mass.

Thus Peer, in this case, Norway, was not worthy even of Hell,—melted down and put on the card with the other buttons.

Against this, set the funeral sermon over the poor peasant, who

— was not wealthy, neither was he wise.

He was short-sighted. Out beyond the circle
of those most near to him, he nothing saw.

No patriot was he. Both for Church and State
a fruitless tree. But there, on the upland ridge,
in the small circle where he saw his calling,
There he was great, because he was himself.

And at the end, Peer finds Solveig waiting; the last note, as in “Brand,” is love.

Going from Protestant Norway to Roman Catholic Italy, Ibsen found, “an indescribable peace.” “No politics,— no militarism,— a people who cannot do much, and do not know much, but they are indescribably beautiful, and sound, and calm.”

Paganism, we have learned, produced Individualism; Ibsen was an individualist. Christianity produced Democracy; Ibsen loathed Democracy;—Democracy is “not black nor white—but gray.” Divided Christianity gives us Roman Catholicism, that judges for each soul; Protestantism, that declares the right of each soul to judge for itself. Ibsen took up the study of Julian the Apostate, who had lived in the days of undivided Christianity and had returned to Paganism. Julian fails, and in his failure cries:

“The seer of Nazareth”—makes the Emperor powerless—

“The Messiah—not of the Jews”—but of

“The Third Empire”—the “Empire of the Spirit and the world.”

The “Third Empire” where Spirit and Flesh, or World, will be reconciled; where light and shadow will be made one—where strength and weakness will be made one—the Millenium.

In this play also he shows how, under tyranny, Christianity, the Mother of Democracy, revived. In his letters he writes: “He who possesses liberty otherwise than as a thing to be striven for, possesses it dead and soulless.” Thus we know liberty because of tyranny.

Before looking at Ibsen's modern plays, which are all tragic and many of them tragedies, it might be of use to note for a moment the difference between the old and the new tragedy. Maeterlinck says of the painter, that it is no longer the battle of kings, nor the assassinations of dukes that he paints; not royal acts of violence. "And therefore," to quote, "will he place on the canvas a house lost in the heart of the country, an open door at the end of a passage, a face and hands at rest."

Democracy has done this. Democracy has lifted everyday people and things into view, and so has revealed them on the plane of tragedy. The old tragedy lived in palaces and courts; and the "tragedy lay in the distance of the fall from the throne to the grave." Jealousy required a dagger, or poison; Love required a Princess for victim, or a Prince; all required Death. Faust, even, brings in the Prince of Darkness.

The elder writers of tragedy had faith to work on,—faith in Heaven, in Hell, in Destiny, in Life, in God. People believed and were moved by these things. To-day, at the end, not Death, but an interrogation point. To-day, Destiny is heredity, is environment. To-day, Heaven, is money; Hell, is poverty; God, is opportunity; Life, is a moment between two blanks; Death an open door at the end of a passage.

Ibsen, then, this spirit that, taking truth for weapon, makes for liberty, for the right of each soul to judge for itself, to *live* itself; Ibsen feeling all this, seeing the trend of modern times, does not waste a moment in melancholy. As has been said, "He does not moan; he indicts." Being far more modern than his day, he is necessarily a Realist, and he digs down to the causes of the present state of things; but being a poet born he is symbolic as well as realistic, and his work is poignant as no work has ever been. He crucifies human nature. He takes up the talk about ideals, and smites it into silence; breaks into the vaults where the terrible, the unspeakable things of life are hidden, and flings them into the face of day; picks into shreds the morality that has one standard for men and another for women. Writes: "An Enemy of the People," "The Pillars of Society," "A Doll's House," "Ghosts," "A Wild Duck," "Rosmer-

holm," "Hedda Gabler," "The Master Builder."—One wonders how he could ever sleep.

"An Enemy of the People" lashes the politicians. "The Pillars of Society" handles the "highly respectable." "A Doll's House," the turning of a doll into a woman, the awakening of a soul, the terrible revealing of a man's estimate of a woman and of the relations between them.

"Ghosts" is not a poetic treatment of heredity, nor of the relations of the man and of the woman to the child; these things are there, are the awful outcome, but are incidentals. The play is written to expose the actual sin that may come of a hide-bound interpretation,—which, for this cause, becomes at once a *mis*-interpretation,—of social conventions and of religious ideals, and the awful results of holding them inflexibly. Because of such an interpretation,—Manders' interpretation of the ideal of marriage,—came the unspeakable results shown in the play. The ideal of marriage is right—is true. Ibsen holds it, all hold it; but this ideal, this "Holy Estate," this "So long as ye both shall live" marriage, is founded on a single-standard morality, and Ibsen's lesson is that this standard has been set aside; the ideal has become a mask to hide sin. The custom has been for the woman only to live up to the ideal. The man may break every law of morality and decency; the woman must do as Mrs. Alving did. The child is the result—the capstone of the tragedy, the imbecile's cry for "The Sun, The Sun," was the climax; the light to show the rottenness covered by the ideals.

It was these ideals, worn as masks, that Ibsen found everywhere,—ideals that, to all intents and purposes, were folded away in camphor, like state garments, and brought out only on state occasions, but which for the rest of the time were disregarded, or, as in the case of Mrs. Alving, were made obligatory only on those who had not developed strength to help themselves, or intellect to think themselves into freedom. It was *this* state of things that roused Ibsen to a fury of truth-telling.

The most loathsome picture of hypocrisy to be found in literature is Engstrand. He is also a most wonderful study in human nature. He has been brought up in the atmosphere of

"Pietistic religious influence." He understands the ideals of Pastor Manders, and uses them as levers to gain his own ends. He has a grudge against Captain Alving, not because Alving had ruined the woman whom Engstrand afterwards accepted money to marry, but because Alving had position and money to do these things; and his revenge against the dead man was the setting on fire of the Orphanage built as a memorial to Alving, and the naming of his own den of iniquity "The Alving Home." He compelled Pastor Manders to give him Alving's money to open this place, because he threatened Manders with the story that Manders had set the Orphanage on fire through carelessness—Manders, whose ideal of a special Providence would not allow him to insure this charitable institution. And Manders,—and his ideals,—his compromising here and there, the expediency that drives him into hypocrisy in order to conform to these ideals,—all this is portrayed in a way that is marvelous.

Through all, Ibsen stands true to his creed, and leaves the questions in this play for each soul to answer for itself. Laws are made,—are necessary,—and with them, recommendations to mercy; rules, and with them, exceptions that prove the rules.

Civilization, coming through Christianity, has found that marriage must be lifted out of the region of whim, and laws both of Church and State have been made to protect marriage. To-day, Church and State are legislating to protect marriage through "A Uniform Divorce Law." When Ibsen's teaching is heeded, and men come to hold the ideal of marriage as sacred as women have been by men compelled to hold it, a uniform divorce law will not be needed. Temperance in all things will be the motto of the world.

"The Wild Duck" is, perhaps, the most remarkable of Ibsen's plays. It was written after he had faced the storm of obloquy that followed "Ghosts;" a storm so vociferous that one fears that the truth of the drama was *too* true, that it pierced too many coats of mail. "The Wild Duck" is, also, the best example of Ibsen's miniature work,—the strokes are so fine, the whole is so finished. It has interest outside the story, too, being a satire *on* Ibsen *by* Ibsen. The catastrophe of the play being

precipitated because of the insistence of Gregers that the high life is the life lived in the clear light of truth and on a foundation of absolute truth; while the contention of Relling, the physician, is, that the "Life Illusion," or, as it may be translated, "The Life Lie" is the thing that makes life endurable. As Agnes says to Brand, "Who sees Jehovah, dies." So the truth, the clear, naked, plain Truth as to ourselves, as to life, would destroy us!

Relling rails on Gregers, ridicules him and his insistence on "the claims of the Ideal" that Gregers "carries about in his coat-tail pocket," presenting it "like a dun to people who are insolvent." "The chronic integrity in acute form," "a national disease" that appears "only sporadically," and that "afflicts" Gregers. This is criminal to Relling. "For illusion," he declares, "is the stimulating principle of life." And he has suggested to those he knows, illusions that will help them to bear life. The life illusion of old Ekdal is the garret where he keeps the wild duck and a few rabbits, where he goes shooting with a pistol, and where he once more feels himself a mighty hunter, a brave man "who has faced death." The life illusion of his forlorn but self-complacent son, Hjalmar, is that his invention,—not yet planned,—will make him famous and reinstate his father's name. The life illusion of Molvik, the drunken clergyman, is that he is Daemonic, and cannot help drinking. Relling fosters all these illusions, and tells Gregers that "lies and ideals are as like as typhus and putrid fever."

Gregers, however, "with his highly developed sense of justice" insists on the truth being told — is in an Ibsen-fury because Hjalmar Ekdal's life is built upon a lie — because Hjalmar had been persuaded by Werle to marry a maid-servant, Gina, who had been cast off by Werle. Gregers reveals this to Hjalmar, and the catastrophe results. Each character in this play is a masterpiece, and the feeling of sordidness that pervades the whole story — that stands out about it like an atmosphere — reminds one of the smell found in the homes of the very poor when in winter all is shut up.

"Rosmersholm" gives us a picture unusual in literature, and almost absent from life — of the woman, Rebecca West, being

able to purify herself, because allowed — given the chance — to purify herself. Millions of men have had this chance, through a true love, to purify themselves, but how many women? Ibsen, however, believing in a single-standard morality, paints this picture for us; but in order to do it, he has to draw a very unusual man.

“Hedda Gabler” comes next, but first we will look at “The Master Builder.”

Toward the end of his life Ibsen returned to Norway to live — at last to make a home — and his welcome was national. It was after this that he wrote “The Master Builder,” “Little Eyolf,” and “John Gabriel Borckman,” the two last of which I have not been able to get.

“The Master Builder” is a curious psychological study. Solness, an ambitious man, not quite a genius but with imagination — hesitates and yet is willing to do cruel and ignoble things in order to succeed. In his success, however, he cannot forget nor yet forgive himself the sins of which he has been guilty — he cannot cease to regret the price he has paid for his elevation, and it makes him afraid. His especial fear is the rising generation — they will, in the end, destroy him. Hilda, who has idealized him, he being the greatest she has known, comes to him to make him keep a forgotten promise he had made to her as a child. She is brilliant with youth — she seems to glitter with life. Instantly she establishes her ascendancy over Solness. He confesses to her his fears of the rising generation — he confesses his cowardice — he confesses his ignoble deeds. She will not believe him; she insists that Solness is what she thinks him to be; she insists that Solness is noble, so, he must and will let young Ragner rise; she insists that Solness is brave, so, she drives him to the top of the tower from which he plunges to his death. Thus the rising generation does destroy him.

Was Ibsen in this play purifying his spirit from jealousy of the rising generation that he had done so much to uplift?

Mrs. Solness is a still more curious study. A woman who is dutiful, loving, patient, religious — the kind of limited woman that Mr. Shaw declares makes the ideal wife — “the wife who does everything that her husband wants her to do, and nothing

else." Mrs. Solness bears with resignation the deaths of her children, whose deaths were caused by a fire that destroyed her old home; the fire which gave her husband his great opportunity as a builder — which was the foundation of his fortune. The children, she says, are happy, are safe; but the loss of her old home she cannot get over. So absolutely undeveloped is she, save in her religion, which affords her comfort as to her children, that she cannot understand her own condition — she cannot reason. Having had no cultivation, no outlet, she, like a mole, has known nothing but her burrow; this has been destroyed, and as would an upturned mole thrown into a box, she butts blindly and hopelessly about on the hard floor of a new life. The poor stunted soul cannot even express herself, and in her bewilderment she fastens on the loss of her childhood's dolls as the capstone of her misery.

In Ibsen's work, "Hedda Gabler" is a new type. She is the emancipated woman. Up to this time Ibsen has treated of the old-fashioned woman; the good women and their opposites — and good or bad he has stood always on the side of the woman. Mrs. Alving and Rebecca West; Mrs. Solness and Gina Ekdal — the first two are educated, developed — the second two uneducated, undeveloped. Nora Helmer stands alone — is a sort of "Galatea." For all of these, Ibsen demanded justice — that justice that is born of truth in morality — single-standard morality — this failing, then liberty to use the divine right to judge for themselves.

"Hedda Gabler" is different, just as emancipation is different from the freedom that Ibsen believes in; he writes: "What you call Liberty, I call liberties; and what I call the struggle for liberty is nothing but the constant, living assimilation of the idea of freedom." This is something quite different from emancipation. Emancipation means a sudden break from bonds to license. If the serfs in Russia and the blacks in this country had been educated before they were emancipated; that is to say, if the emancipation had been gradual — had been worked for — if there had been a "constant, living assimilation of the idea of freedom," and not a break from bonds to license, things would have been quite different. So with women, who, because of injustice — because of the Helmers, and the Alvings, have had to

break from bonds into license. And, in the two first cases the results are the Nihilists and Lynch Law—and in the third case, the Hedda Gablers.

Hedda Gabler breaks away from all the old ideals without having formed or found for herself new ideals; she is a Philistine; she has not the brake-wheel of "*Noblesse Oblige*"—the elevation of a high view—the Spiritual development of hereditary education and refinement. She is the middle-class degenerate, who is the result of a Democratic society that has not as yet produced a Plutocracy, and that thus has not even the smallest germ of a future Aristocracy.

All of Ibsen's dramas, save "Emperor and Galilean," and "The Master Builder," have the one end in view—the holding up to ridicule and to obloquy the Philistine society of Norway, and incidentally, of the world. All his work is that of the Miniature Artist—delicate strokes—wonderful shading—minute suggestions—at the same time the effects are those of the Impressionist artist,—Rembrandt lights and shadows.

The problems of Ibsen's plays are universal. Wherever there is humanity, there these problems are found. We discuss the solution—we listen to the views of Smith, Jones and Brown,—of fathers, mothers, Pastors and Masters; but when the crucial moment comes, we must decide for ourselves. And this is Ibsen's creed. This is the real individualism. This is the Divine Right that must not be touched.

There are customs,—there are conventions,—there are ideals,—there are laws—these must be considered; but in the last analysis, each one is responsible to himself, for himself—each one lives and dies to himself. Ibsen tells us this in every play—and lived it and died it, for his mind went out before his body did. He could not ask for sympathy—he could not give it—he could not understand it. He, himself, became a symbol of loneliness.

His mission in life was to show truth—was to do justice, and so, to rouse and better the people. Of his moral accomplishments, time only can give proof. Of what he did intellectually, Doctor Brandes says: "Scandinavian literature is a different thing now from what it was when he made a name with

'Brand,' or when he opened up new paths with his dramas of modern life. In Norway, as well as in Denmark, Iceland, Sweden and Finland, a young literature has burst into blossom, rich in fresh talent, great and small. Each of the Scandinavian countries has led the way in turn, and at present are all engaged in a vigorous, promising rivalry. Nevertheless there can scarcely be a doubt that Scandinavian literature has produced its best in Ibsen's dramas; by them the outside world can measure the height it has attained, where it has built the highest."

Of what he accomplished politically, may we not look on the new King Hakon as a result? Whatever Ibsen may have felt as a united Scandinavian, would he not have agreed to an independent Norway, who, stamping out all suggestion of compromise with Sweden, crowned her own King?

"By their fruits shall ye know them."

SARAH BARNWELL ELLIOTT.

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